1. INTRODUCTION
1. INTRODUCTION

Adjustment is a household word. We speak of people as being well adjusted or poorly adjusted. Related to these terms may be notions of being psychologically normal or abnormal, at least to a degree. Well adjusted people are regarded as successful in the art of living.

The psychology of adjustment is, in fact, based on our concern with the quality of life. It focuses on practical aspects of understanding ourselves, understanding others, and living in harmony with ourselves and others.

It is said that life is a continuous process of adjustment. At every moment man has to adjust to the reality and has to satisfy his needs within the framework of the society to which he belongs. The problems for the man of today appear to have increased manifold, and have become inevitable. Summing up the inevitability of the problems, Schneider (1960) states,

"Everyone can expect periods of unhappiness, tension, frustration, depression, worry, anxiety or mental turmoil. Into every life fine mist of minor maladjustment must fall, and one must always be careful that it does not become a downpower."

---

2 Schneider, A.A., Personality Adjustment and Mental Health, New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960
Man is never free from problems. At all times man has faced problems of not only body but also of mind. Life has never been a smooth journey for man, be he the caveman or the twentieth century man. There are many obstacles either internal or external which interfere with the need satisfaction of an individual. Such obstacles place adjustive demands or stress on the individual. Stress is an inevitable part of everyday life. Selye (1966), rightly remarks that, "many of the human illnesses are based on the process of adaptation to the stress of life."³

The tremendous scientific progress that man has made since the dawn of the scientific era has however, not been commensurate with human happiness. Coleman (1956) has rightly summarised the conflicting and confusing modern life in the following lines:

"Modern man's path to happiness is not an easy one. It is beset by seemingly endless personal and social problems... with all his uncertainties and anxieties, he has few moral beliefs to guide him or to make him feel that his life is meaningful and worthwhile. His faith is rugged individualism and material possessions have proved sadly disillusioning."⁴

1.1 Nature of Adjustment:

The term 'Adjustment' came into use in psychology during 1930's and was given strong endorsement by Laurence Schaffer's classic book 'The Psychology of Adjustment' (1936).

The concept of adjustment originated in Biology. In Biology, the term is usually employed as 'Adaptation', a concept which was a cornerstone in Darwin's theory of evolution. He maintained that, those species most fitted to adapt to the hazards of the physical world, survived.

The Biological concept was borrowed by the psychologist and renamed 'Adjustment' which refers to the individual's behavior dealing with or mastering demands that are made upon him by his environment.

Every individual strives constantly to satisfy his needs. The environmental pressures, on the other hand, force him to behave in certain ways. The interaction of the individual with his environment represents a dynamic state of equilibrium - disequilibrium between the exigencies of his personal needs and the situational demands. Thus, an individual, while satisfying his needs has to function within the framework of the environment to which he belongs. If we examine the various activities of an individual's life, we will find that most of them involve his adjustment to his personal, social and vocational problems. The process of adjustment being continuous, starts right
from birth and proceeds till death.

A plethora of definitions are given to the term 'Adjustment' by psychologists and others. These definitions relate mainly to two or three basic aspects of adjustment.

Eysenck and Arnold define adjustment as, (1) "a state in which the needs of the individual on the one hand and the claims of the environment on the other hand are fully satisfied. Harmony between the individual and the objective or social environment (2) "The process by which this harmonious relationship can be attained."

According to Boring et al., adjustment is "a process by which a living organism maintains balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs." And for Munn, Adjustment is "a continuous process of satisfying one's needs rather than something fixed and static, and it involves virtually all aspects of human behaviour."

Boring et al., and Munn are similar in their approach in defining adjustment as a process of satisfying one's needs. Munn for instance, emphasizes the continuous process of satisfying one's needs as adjustment which implies virtually all aspects of human behaviour.

---

He does not accept adjustment as something fixed and static. Similarly, Boring and his associates refer to adjustment as a process by which a living organism maintains balance between its needs and the circumstances that influence the satisfaction of these needs. The underlying aspects in these definitions are:

1. the existence of human needs
2. satisfaction of these needs, and
3. the process of maintaining balance between the needs and their satisfaction.

According to White, "The concept of adjustment implies a constant interaction between the person and his environment, each making demands on the other. Sometimes adjustment is accomplished when the person yields and accepts conditions which are beyond his power to change, and sometimes it is achieved when the environment yields to the person's constructive activities. In most cases adjustment is a compromise between these two extremes and maladjustment is a failure to achieve a satisfactory compromise."^8

Coleman defines adjustment as, "effectiveness of the individual's efforts to meet his needs and adapt to his environment."^9

Coleman and White believe that adjustment relates to harmonious relationship between the environment and individuals' abilities and efforts.

---

to meet and satisfy his needs. The similarity of their approach is revealed by the fact that they emphasize on the following aspects:

1. Individual's efforts to meet his needs and
2. Adapting himself to his environment.

White points out further that adjustment sometimes is accomplished when the person yields and accepts conditions which are beyond his power to change, while at other times it is achieved when the environment yields to his effective activities. He is of the opinion that adjustment in most cases is a compromise between these two extreme forms of behaviour.

The definitions of Coleman and White stated above are similar to the definition given in the Dictionary of Behavioural Sciences, viz., "Adjustment is a harmonious relationship with the environment involving the ability to satisfy most of one's needs and meet most of the demands, both physical and social, that are put upon one." The definition further refers to "The variations and changes in behaviour that are necessary to satisfy needs and meet demands so that one can establish a harmonious relationship with the environment."10

The two aspects of adjustment stated above have been emphasized also by some other psychologists like Mckinney (1941), William Coe (1972), Arkoff (1968) and others. Mckinney says, "You are high in

adjustiveness if you can meet broadly your long term needs with the resources available in your environment.” While, William Coe, states that, personal adjustment is, "The process by which an individual applies his resources to fulfil his personal needs while at the same time maintaining harmony with his environment."°

Arkoff is forthright and direct in defining adjustment as "interaction between a person and his environment.”

A person is said to be adjusted when he is so related to remarkably adequate environment that he is relatively happy, efficient and has a degree of social feeling. In simple words, adjustment is a relationship between an individual and his environment, through which his needs are satisfied adequately in accordance with environmental demands.

1.2 Factors influencing adjustment:

A comprehensive review of psychological investigations on the adjustment of adolescents with special reference to students, would show that a number of socio-psychological factors have a bearing on adjustment.

The studies of Burt (1937), Schonel (1942), Patel & Joshi (1977), etc. have emphasized the dynamic nature of the adjustment process and observed that this process is likely to be influenced by several factors. Some such factors that have been studied by different investigators, relating them to adjustment are: study habits, anxiety, motivation, vocational interests, intelligence, academic achievement, socio-economic status, sex, job preference, type of family, order of birth, hobbies, and early educational background. A close study of the findings reported so far, however, reveals that many such findings are inconclusive.

Researchers like Berger and Sutkar (1956), Rao (1964), Patel and Joshi (1976), Srimathi (1971), Periera (1979), and Shivappa (1980), have reported relationship of certain variables like intelligence and academic achievement of high school and college students with their adjustment. On the other hand, researchers like, Dentsch (1960), Gupta and Singal (1971), Abraham (1971), Srimathi (1971), and Bansal (1973), have reported no relationship of intelligence and academic achievement of high school and college students with their adjustment. Such a controversy in the findings might be due to where, when, and how, and on whom the studies were conducted. Because of the dynamic nature of the phenomenon of adjustment, it is possible that the interest of researchers in the study of adjustment of high school students remains alive even today, and most probably would remain alive in the decades to come. Hence, the scientific necessity warrants us to continue our attempts to know as clearly as possible, the relationship that may exist between adjustment on the one hand and factors like abilities, academic
achievement, vocational interests and socio-economic background, on the other.

1.3 Measurement of Adjustment:

Different techniques like, auto-biographical records, case history, rating scales, interviews, check lists, and questionnaires have been used for studying adjustment. Even projective techniques are being used particularly, to study clinical cases. Check lists and inventories like Mooney Problem Check list (Mooney and Gordon, 1950), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, (Hathaway, and Mckinley, 1967) California test of Personality, (Tiegs et al., 1939), Bell's Adjustment Inventory (Bell, 1939) Personality Adjustment Inventory (Saxena, 1955, 1962) and Personality Adjustment Inventory (1964) prepared by the Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, are used.

The California test of Personality, for example is organised around the concept of life adjustment as a balance between personal and social adjustment. This inventory provides the maladjustment scores. The well known Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory was originally developed, to assess those traits that are commonly characteristic of disabling psychological abnormality. It was designed for persons from ten years and above. It provides scores on ten clinical scales. Saxena's inventory, in Hindi, contains 90 questions, and provides five separate measures of adjustment in the following fields: home, school/college, social, health and emotional. Several researchers have

A few adaptations of Bell's Adjustment Inventory are available in India. For example, The Personality Adjustment Inventory, prepared by the Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, is a modification of Bell's Adjustment Inventory, which consists of 100 items, covering five areas of adjustment—social, emotional, health, home and family. It has reliability coefficients for different areas varying from 0.77 to 0.89 and enjoys a degree of internal consistency as well as validity against rating by clinical interviews. Jamuar (1969) has adapted the Bell's Adjustment Inventory in Hindi, and Singh (1981) in Punjabi.

The inventory is adapted in English and Kannada by A S Dharanendriah and P. Asha (1974) and norms have been developed for the same. For the description of this inventory please refer P 48.

The Bell's Adjustment Inventory has been used by a number of investigators like Kundu and Mitra (1967), Jamuar (1969), Shivasankarappa (1981), Singh (1981) and several others.

Bell's Adjustment Inventory consists of two forms, one for high school and college students (Student form) and the other for adults (Adult form). The Student Form is designed to measure adjustment in
four areas - home, health, social and emotional. This form consists of one hundred and sixty questions in total. The Adult Form, in addition to the four areas stated above, provides an additional score for occupational adjustment. This form consists of one hundred and sixty questions in total. Even though this inventory is not the first inventory developed to measure the different aspects of adjustment, it is the first inventory developed on the basis of item analysis.¹⁴

This inventory is of a folder type. On the front page of the inventory the instructions are given. Three response categories are included namely, 'Yes', 'No', and '?' But while scoring, the '?' response is not considered. Separate scoring keys for each area of adjustment are available. The negative responses to items are added up and the maladjustment score is obtained. By adding all the separate area scores, the total adjustment score is obtained. The scores yielded are best interpreted in terms of excellent, good, average, unsatisfactory and very unsatisfactory adjustment as the case may be.

**Home adjustment** is measured to know whether the individuals are satisfied or dissatisfied with their home-life and associations. Individuals scoring high tend to be un-satisfactorily adjusted to their home surroundings. Those scoring low are satisfactorily adjusted to their home life.

---

Health Adjustment is measured to know whether the individuals have been ill much, have had operations, suffer from minor ailments and their extent of illness. Individuals scoring high tend to be unsatisfactorily adjusted to their health. Low scores indicate satisfactory health adjustment.

Social Adjustment is measured to know whether the individuals are shy, retiring, submissive, introverted and aggressive. Individuals scoring high tend to be submissive and retiring in their social contacts. Individuals with low scores are aggressive in their social contacts.

Emotional Adjustment is measured to know whether the individuals are easily disturbed, nervous, depressed, initiated, excited etc. Individuals scoring high tend to be unstable emotionally while individuals scoring low tend to be emotionally stable.

The inventory has been widely used and is known for its reliability and validity.

1.4 Significance of the study:

Adjustment has become an essential requisite of modern life. Everywhere people want to overcome their adjustment difficulties. Especially, the adjustment problems of adolescents are to be understood properly and adequate care should be taken to resolve such problems.
The adolescent moves through life, building upon the accomplishments of the stage just past, confronting the task of the current stage and preparing for the future. A failure in mastering these tasks eventuates in personal unhappiness, disapproval of society, immaturity in-competency, and consequent difficulties in mastering later developmental tasks. Thus, the onward growth process may be crippled. Therefore it is necessary to gain a fair insight into the problems of adjustment of the adolescents, in order they may be helped to deal effectively with the 'stress' and 'strain' that characterise uniquely this phase of development.

Studies on adjustment of adolescents, are intended to enrich our understanding of the nature of adjustment in relation to some of the most important factors like intelligence, academic achievement, vocational interests and socio-economic background. Understanding of adjustment of high school students calls for the most direct and immediate interest of parents, psychologists, educationists as well as, of those who are engaged in rendering counselling and guidance services to the students.